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ABSTRACT

A description of how the Karuk Indians of northwestern California gathered and prepared acorns for food includes illustrations and Karuk words for utensils and processes. The booklet explains how women of the tribe gathered, dried, stored, cracked, ground, leached, and cooked acorns to make acorn soup. Illustrations supplement descriptions of storage baskets, pestles, sifters, and cooking techniques. (LFL)

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KARUK ACORN BOOK



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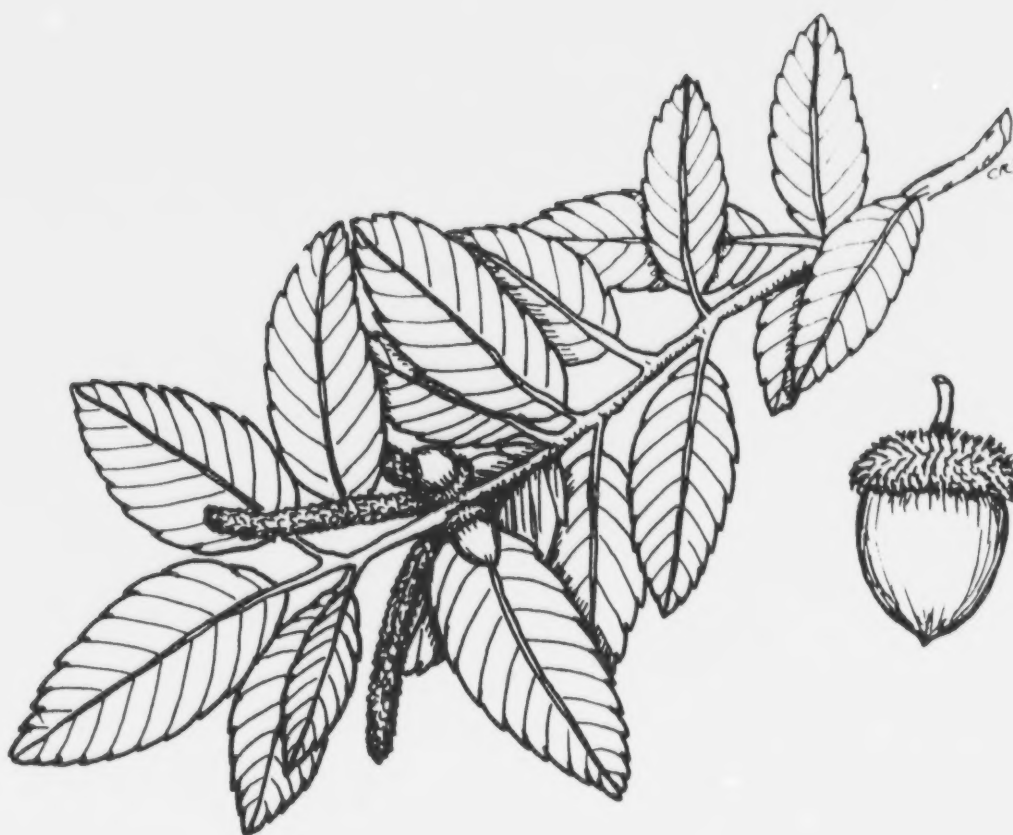
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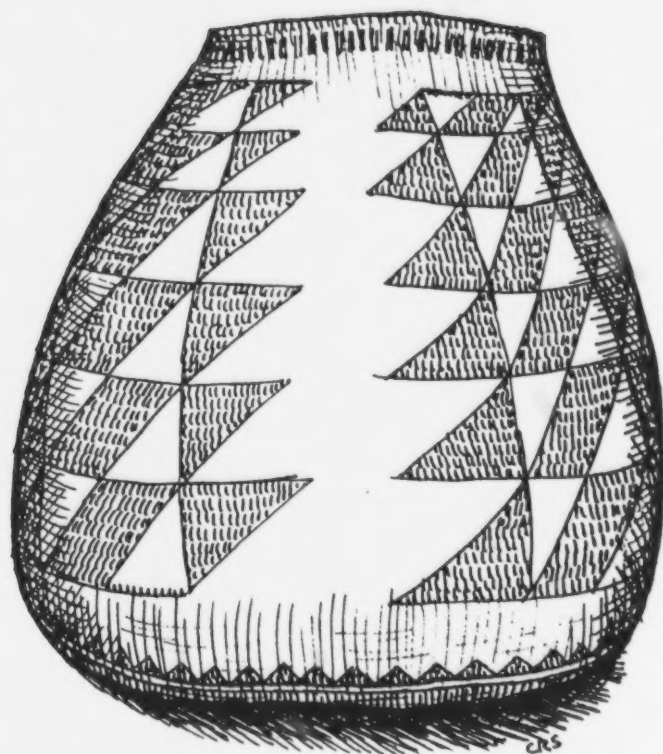
I. PREPARING THE ACORNS

A. Gathering Acorns

The month of September is the time to gather acorns, called PU-HU-KO. Gathering acorns is primarily the work of the women, although men and boys may climb trees and knock the acorns to the ground.

In good weather, acorns are placed in the sun to dry. They may be dried on the roof at home, or on racks in the sun at a camp.

A long stick is used to knock the acorns off the trees, and a burden basket (UT-T+M-NUV) is used to carry the acorns.



B. Storing the Acorns

At camp, acorns are often shelled as soon as they are dry. At home, dried acorns may be stored for a few days or for a longer period, up to a year.

Acorn storage baskets are close twined, wider at the base and narrowing until the top is only half the diameter of the base. This type of basket, C+P-NOK-MU-YON-NUR, measures about 39" wide at the base and is about 32" high.

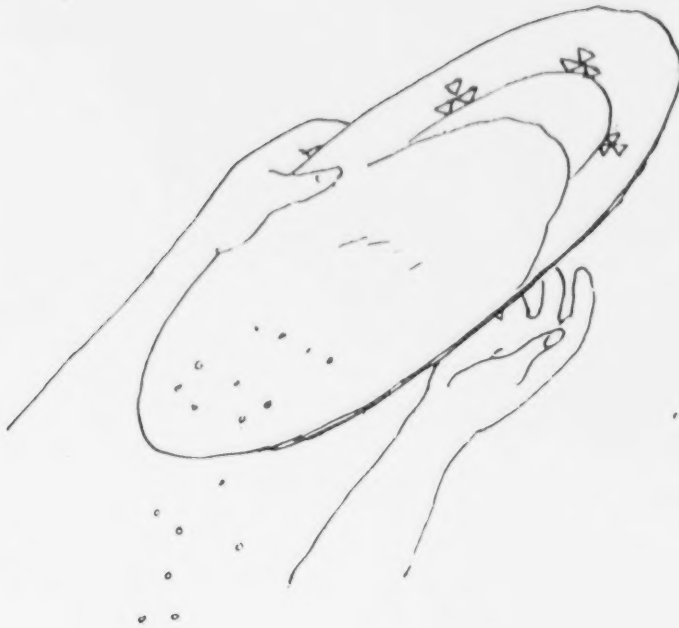


C. Acorn Cracking and Grinding

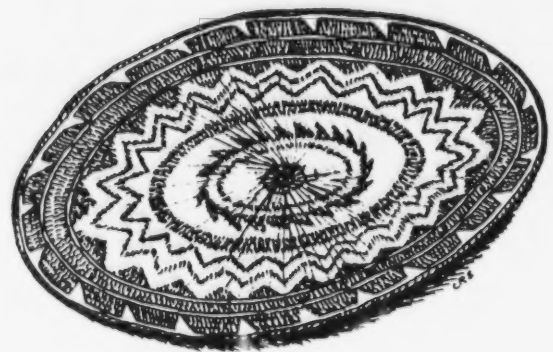
Acorns are cracked with a pestle, and the hard shell and inner skin are removed. The dried acorn meat is called XO-R+S.

The XO-R+S is then pounded on a flat rock, inside a basket called +K-ROM-NUV. The bottom of the basket is cut out to fit over the grinding stone. The woman pounded the XO-R+S with a stone pounder called +K-ROV-UR. You can still find rocks with holes where acorns have been pounded in the past.

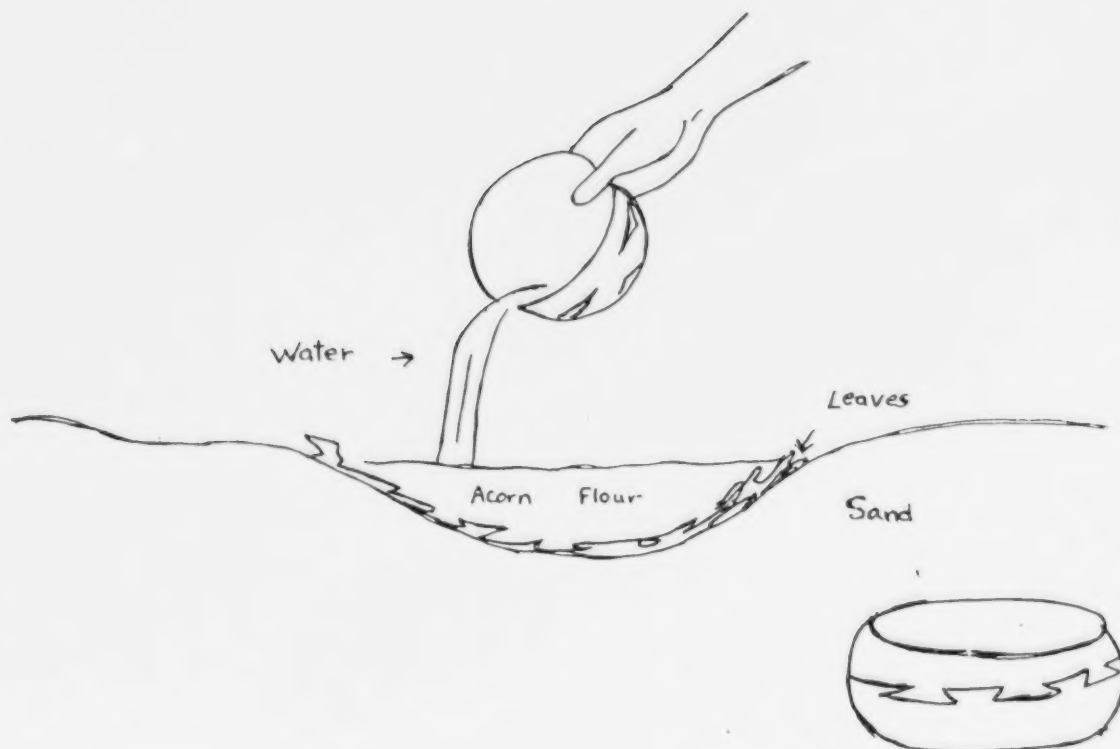
After the acorns are ground into flour, the woman uses her hand to draw the meal toward the sifting basket (ΘUM-TOP-RUV). The coarser flour is retained within the sifter, and the finer powder runs over the lower edge of the sifter.



Sifting Acorn Flour



ACORN SIFTING BASKET



D. Leaching the Acorns

Leaching (TUK-K+R) is done to take out the bitter taste of the tannic acid. The woman uses a hard, flat stone to make a little hollow in clean, packed sand. She pours warm water gently over the meal (YOF); as fast as the water soaks into the sand, more water is added. When the flour is no longer bitter, the woman removes the flour by roughening the surface with her hand. She then puts her palm down and scoops up the flour with a coating of sand. She holds this over a basket and washes off the sand.

Acorns may also be leached by pouring warm water over acorn flour in a sifting basket lined with cheesecloth.



II. COOKING ACORN SOUP

The acorn meal is placed in a cooking basket (BOOR-RUM-PDK-ROV) with a little water. Then the women gather special river rocks called PUX-VOC, which are cleaned, heated, and then dropped into the YOF. After a few minutes, more water is added, and the stones are replaced with hot ones.

During cooking, the meal is stirred with a wooden spoon (TUC-VON), to keep the hot meal from burning the bottom of the basket.

When the meal is all cooked, the rocks are removed. More warm water is added, and the acorn soup (XOOX) is ready.